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ABSTRACT

Approaches to articulation/transfer in several states and some individual colleges and universities are examined. Guidelines and/or policies from state commissions, agencies, or systems of higher education in Rhode Island, Maryland, Illinois, North Carolina, and South Carolina are described. In Rhode Island, a transfer guide presents broad policy for the state's postsecondary institutions and specifies transfer policies and implementation procedures as individually developed by the three state institutions. Six sections of the guide are noted, and it is concluded that the document achieves a reasonable balance between state prerogative and institutional responsibility. A 1980 Maryland policy document recommends, but does not require, completion of the associate degree before application for transfer. The Illinois Community College Board attempts to resolve differences to strengthen the relationships between the university and community colleges. Among the initiatives in Illinois is improvement of business education articulation/transfer. The 1979 statewide articulation guidelines in North Carolina include material on transcripts, revised guidelines on general education and nontraditional education, and paraprofessional and professional education course equivalencies. The South Carolina Master Plan does not assure transfer by completion of an associate degree because, for one reason, only six of the state's 16 technical colleges are authorized to offer college-parallel programs. The plan protects the integrity of lower-division institutions. Course equivalency guides that have appeared as supplements to or in lieu of state articulation/transfer policy are noted, along with agreements negotiated by individual colleges and universities. (SW)

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Articulation/Transfer Agreements:

Alternative Approaches

Frederick C. Kintzer

Progress in articulation/transfer is occurring in several dimensions: (1) guidelines and policies developed by state agencies or systems of higher education; (2) documents in the form of equivalency guides issued by institutions; and (3) agreements negotiated by individual colleges or universities. In this discussion, special consideration will be given to a system developing in two states to improve the "bookkeeping" of the transfer process—a most complex and difficult problem, particularly when large numbers of transfer applicants are involved.

Guidelines and/or Policies from State Commissions, Agencies, or Systems of Higher Education

Rhode Island. A document released in April 1980 by the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Education represents the latest statewide effort to standardize articulation and transfer.[1] Entitled *A Transfer Guide for Students*, the publication first presents broad policy for the state's postsecondary schools, a valid responsibility, and follows with more specific transfer policies and implementing procedures as individually developed by the three state institutions: The Community College of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, and the University of Rhode Island.

Admission to a baccalaureate degree-granting institution in Rhode Island is assured by the completion of the associate degree with a 2.4 grade-point average. However, students can apparently transfer at any time with minimally acceptable grades.

Several sections of the *Transfer Guide* merit special note: (1) The transferability of credit is not to be affected by the direction of student movement vertically or horizontally. This statement reflects the marked increase of "reverse transfers" (from four-year to two-year institutions) and "horizontal transfers" (between two four-year or two-year institutions). Credits should indeed remain the legal tender of transfer regardless of applicant direction. (2) The integrity of the sending institution's general education program is to be recognized by the receiving institution. Such credits earned are, therefore, to be accepted in advanced standing. Prerequisite courses completed elsewhere are also valid. (3) Specific reference is made to the assessment of prior learning experiences for academic credit. Institutions are required to state criteria for measuring and awarding such credit, and urged to consider credit for prior learning and other nontraditional styles on the same basis as "any more traditionally recognized recorded credit."[2] (4) A permanent interinstitutional articulation/transfer committee has already been established by the Postsecondary Education Executive Council, and each institution is instructed to designate an articulation/transfer officer to coordinate the total effort. This combination of state intersegmental committee and institutional appointment is vital to maintaining a viable articulation/transfer relationship. (5) Students are assured due process after all avenues for problem solution have been investigated. The articulation/transfer officer then becomes the pivotal person. Unresolved cases are to be reviewed by the state committee. (6) Courses taken in vocational-technical areas are evaluated individually, along with nontraditional credits; e.g., CLEP and Armed forces, "D" grades, and "pass" or "credit" grades.

The final pages of the document feature a department-by-department transfer credit guide that presents specific course equivalencies within the three institutions. A uniform course-numbering system is employed. The Rhode Island *Transfer Guide* achieves a reasonable balance between state prerogative and institutional responsibility.

Maryland: A new set of twelve transfer policies became effective in fall 1980 in Maryland's postsecondary education institutions. Developed by a Segmental Advisory Committee Task Force and approved by the state board for higher education, this document supersedes the two-section broad policy statement announced in the 1973 "Statewide Master Plan."[3]

Unlike some of the earlier statewide agreements, the Maryland policy document recommends, but does not require, completion of the associate degree before application for transfer. The policy is similar to that of the University of California-California Community Colleges: a high school graduate attending a community college may enter the university any semester if he or she maintains a "C" average in parallel courses. The student must have been eligible for admission at the time of high school graduation. Characteristic of newer agreements, an appeal mechanism was established through the Segmental Advisory Committee of the state board. Other standard regulations include (1) credit for CLEP general examinations according to institutional policy, (2) credit transfer on a course-by-course basis of technical (career) programs, orientation classes, remedial courses, and work experience, and (3) a seventy-credit transfer limit.

Again, the conservative stance on transferring vocational credits prevails. In that regard, progress reported in the spring 1980 newsletter was largely in interinstitutional relations rather than in statewide policy. The Allied Health Articulation Project in North Carolina is the one exception. As Hohenstein suggested, using blocks of career courses as a fixed number of electives in a baccalaureate program appears to be the most widely acceptable procedure for awarding advanced-standing credit in technical (career) education.[4]

[1] Rhode Island Board of Regents for Higher Education, *A Transfer Guide for Students*, Providence: Board of Regents for Higher Education, April 1980.

[2] Ibid. p. 6.

[3] Maryland State Board for Community Colleges, *Statewide Master Plan for Community Colleges in Maryland 1973–1983*, Annapolis: MSBCC, October 1973, p. 18.

[4] Walter Hohenstein, "Commentary: Nothing's Terminal," *College and University*, Spring 1980, p. 300.

Illinois. For two decades, educators in Illinois have involved themselves actively in the entire field of articulation/transfer. Rapid growth in the number of community colleges and students prompted the "Baccalaureate Articulation Compact" in 1970, which received widespread acceptance. By 1976, virtually all two- and four-year institutions had endorsed the compact at least in principle. The compact required that associate-degree graduates from Illinois community colleges be accepted at public universities as juniors and guaranteed graduation after two more years of successful course work in the same program.[5] Although the proposed compact was tabled in November 1976 for two-years of study that addressed problems primarily related to implementation, considerable progress has been made during recent years in strengthening relationships between the university and the community colleges.

The Illinois Community College Board has taken initiative in resolving differences. Acting on the legislative mandate of the Illinois Junior College Act (sections 102-111, 1965), the state board has coordinated studies in a dozen or more curricular areas. The state board was also instrumental in persuading both public and private colleges and universities to appoint articulation coordinators with decision-making authority. The first state agency (other than California's) to start this kind of association, the Illinois board meets several times a year to review the status of articulation/transfer.

The Community College-Senior College Articulation Task Force, appointed after the tabling of the "Baccalaureate Articulation Compact," issued in 1978 one of the most comprehensive reports analyzing a state's articulation/transfer situation. Some of the recommendations deserve special consideration by other states. For example, the task force recommended that a statewide handbook be developed displaying requirements of four-year institutions in the most popular majors of community college students. Community colleges were asked to include the information about the transfer processes in staff development programs for transfer student advisors, and to develop transfer planning handbooks and videotape materials for counselors and students. The 1970 "General Education Resolution," which included the compact, would serve as the primary philosophical document.[6]

Illinois has also lead in attacking difficult curricular transfer problems that persist in many states. One of these, in business education, has recently been reviewed by the Illinois Board for Higher Education, which recognizes articulation/transfer as part of its coordinating responsibility. A major difficulty that occurs nationwide arises from one of the curricular standards of the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business. According to AACSB policy, professional courses in business should be concentrated in the last two undergraduate years, with only a limited amount in the first two.[7] This obviously limits the participation of two-year colleges in baccalaureate programs. As a recent Board of Higher Education report indicates, several Illinois institutions are trying to alleviate adverse effects of the regulation. At Northern Illinois University, departments in the College of Business review community college course outlines and offer substitute course lists to make the credit transfer process more flexible. Although this procedure may appear to be a step backward (reviewing course outlines), it is actually a logical first step in tackling a difficult problem. The university also holds two-day sessions for community college faculty members to foster communication on business course acceptance. Governor's State University has developed fifty-nine cooperative business and public information programs with two-year colleges to implement the AACSB policies.[8]

Largely due to actions taken by individual institutions at the urging of the Higher Education Board and the Community College Board, business education articulation/transfer is improving.

North Carolina. Statewide articulation guidelines were initially developed in 1967. The 1979 edition is greatly expanded to include material on transcripts (a detailed description based on a guide developed by the American Association of Collegiate Registers and Admissions Officers), revised guidelines on general education, a new discussion and guidelines on nontraditional education, and several recently established paraprofessional and professional education course equivalencies usually charted in first- and second-year programs.[9]

The nationwide proliferation of experimental learning programs necessitates state guidelines to maintain order. The statement on general education contains goals, policies, and recommended requirements with minimum units of work. The section on nontraditional education, which includes a philosophical discussion, definitions, issues of concern, and a series of guidelines for admitting students and evaluating credits, is probably the most complete of any found in a state articulation/transfer document.

The questions raised in the section on admission of nontraditional students should be addressed by institutions contemplating policies in these areas: (1) Should nontraditional admission applicants be held to essentially the same admission criteria established for traditional students? (2) If new or different admissions criteria for nontraditional applicants are needed, what considerations should be examined? What are the most valid and reliable means for assessing academic ability of nontraditional applicants? What is the necessary balance between the use of objective data and subjective judgment? (3) To what extent and in what manner should nontraditional learning experiences be considered in making admission decisions? (4) To what extent are institutions of higher education obligated to provide remediation for nontraditional applicants who do not meet minimal standards? This section in the North Carolina guidelines encourages institutions to explore the exciting possibilities of experiential learning. Department leaders should study materials available from Coalition for Alternatives in Postsecondary Education (CAPE) and Council on the Advancement of Experimental Learning (CAEL).

The North Carolina special report is indeed unique among state guidelines.

South Carolina. *The South Carolina Master Plan for Higher Education,* developed by the Commission on Higher Education and released December 1979, is a major contribution to the

[5]Illinois Community College—Senior College Articulation Task Force, *Community College–Senior College Articulation in Illinois,* Urbana: University of Illinois Office of School and College Relations, August 1978, p. 3.

[6]Ibid. pp. 62-67.

[7]AACSB Accreditation Council, *Policies, Procedures, and Standards (1977–78).* American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business, pp. 34-35.

[8]Illinois State Board of Higher Education, "Statewide Review of Business Programs in Illinois," 11 March 1980, pp. 67-68.

[9]North Carolina Association of Colleges and Universities. *Guidelines for Transfer.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, April 1980.

state planning literature. Replacing the previous document published by the commission in 1972, *Goals for Higher Education to 1980*, the new plan offers comprehensive statements on the goals for postsecondary and supporting institutional missions and defines the role of the commission in coordinating the efforts of the system of thirty-three public institutions.

Considerable attention in the document is given to articulation/transfer. Guidelines emphasize the importance of voluntary interinstitutional cooperation. Responsibilities of both sending and receiving institutions are defined, and transfer credit is recommended, with reasonable guidelines and safeguards, for experiential education and for courses given by noncollegiate and unaccredited schools.[10]

Transfer is not assured by completion of an associate degree because, for one reason, only six of the state's sixteen technical colleges are authorized to offer college-parallel programs. The University of South Carolina system includes five two-year campuses that offer associate degrees: such cases have compelled the Commission to initiate studies to determine the degree of mission duplication or overlap that occurs among four- and two-year institutions. The integrity of the lower-division institution is protected through an additional feature of the South Carolina plan. Once a student has successfully completed thirty semester hours in a transfer program, a high school transcript and entrance examination scores would no longer be required for transfer acceptance. Integrity of the lower-division institution is thus protected.

As the coordinating body, the Commission on Higher Education is conducting a statewide study of successful transfers and will establish an advisory committee on the feasibility of lower-division core curricula, such as the Georgia Core Curriculum. If such curricula are eventually authorized, care would then have to be taken to avoid stifling the individuality of lower-division institutions.

The South Carolina Master Plan is a major step forward in statewide postsecondary planning.

Equivalency Guides Developed by Institutions or State Organizations

Recently, course equivalency guides have appeared as supplements to or in lieu of state articulation/transfer policy. Often initiated voluntarily by individuals representing a college, university, or state coordinating commission or council, these documents provide reference tools for counselors and students. Ordinarily, they avoid detailed explanations of admissions and degree requirements. In addition to providing specific course equivalencies, they also serve as catalysts that encourage interdepartmental and interdivisional communication between sending and receiving institutions. Pertinent documents include the *Guide to Equivalence and Transfer of Junior College Credits*, developed by Hubert E. Mate, Director of Curriculum Studies for the University of Alabama System, Alabama, and the *1979 Articulation Study* (Ohio), compiled by Ronald E. Armitage, Director of Student Services, Stark Technical College, Ohio. This college serves as a clearinghouse for articulation information and, through Ronald Armitage's office, continues to update the equivalency guide.

The University of California recently released a *Mini Guide to Articulation*. In it, a three-column table outlines procedures for determining course transfer: (1) How a community college course applies on all UC campuses (e.g., classified as non-transferable but not as a high school "omission" or "deficiency," or elective credit toward degree only on all campuses); (2) Who determines how a course applies (e.g., UC Coordinator for Admissions and Relations with Schools, or dean/provost of the campus school or college, frequently in consultation with department chairpersons); (3) How a community college articulation officer obtains the various levels of course clearance (e.g., annually submits to the systemwide office a proposed list of courses to be accepted for transfer, with a brief statement about new courses, or, if course clearance is for general studies or major requirements, submits to the campus articulation officer). The table also shows systemwide prerogatives and the responsibilities of the several campuses. This instrument and explanatory material were announced in the April 1980 issue of *California Notes*, a monthly newsletter on articulation/transfer. Although these arrangements appear complicated, the actual communication channels are simple and direct.

Agreements Negotiated by Individual Colleges and Universities

Senior institutions receiving considerable numbers of transfers from community colleges must eventually develop a system for recording, displaying, and communicating articulation/transfer policies and procedures. Some of these techniques are quite specific, the most prevalent being the arrangement of course and unit equivalencies in corresponding columns by discipline. Others are less specific, such as displays of course sequences in lower- and upper-division work at both sending and receiving institutions. Such displays may include categorical listings of subject fields and descriptions of courses rather than actual course titles and numbers. This style is more popular in career program transfer statements, in which listings of subject areas instead of courses seem to be the more appropriate format.

The reports of programs articulated between the University of Maryland and most of the state's community colleges contain all of the above elements. Compiled and published by the Articulation Office of the University (Walter V. Hohenstein, director), these agreements include one- and two-year programs in both academic career categories and general education equivalencies. The office issues the reports in sets for the individual sending colleges to enable them to more systematically and inexpensively redistribute the equivalency information to students.

Dissemination of articulation/transfer information is frequently neglected. Material vital to prospective transfers and counselors alike holds little value on a shelf in the admissions office. Applicants should not have to ask for help.

For the purpose of distributing information and communicating with the constituency, the College of Du Page (Glen Ellyn, Illinois) publishes a school/college articulation newsletter, *Scan*. One of the few in the country reserved exclusively for articulation/transfer information, the four- to six-page quarterly provides an excellent vehicle for maintaining vitality in the field. (David Boyd, admissions associate, is the creator and editor.) Such communication devices, however, should only *supplement* the course equivalency charting that must necessarily be updated regularly.

[10]South Carolina Commission on Higher Education, *South Carolina Master Plan for Higher Education*. Columbia: SCCHE, December 1979, p. 199.
[11]Ibid.

As the transfer phenomenon grows in applicant volume and programmatic diversity, record keeping and disseminating accurate, timely information to individuals and institutions become increasingly difficult and expensive. A computer-assisted system developed, approved, and copyrighted by the Michigan Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers in 1979 shows promise in lessening the bookkeeping burden and the time lag in communications. Called ESCALATE (Establishment of a Statewide Computer-Assisted Library to Advance Transfer Equivalencies), the system can provide instant transfer information. A computer with card reader and printer is the minimal hardware requirement.[12] Seventeen institutions now participate in the project, and the statewide ESCALATE committee envisions the creation of a clearinghouse where, at the minimum, transfer equivalency information could be stored for institutional use.

A similar project has been developing simultaneously in California: the Computerized Articulation Project (CAP), an intersegmental program involving the California State University and Colleges and the California Community Colleges. Piloted initially by California State Polytechnic University (Pomona) and four neighboring community colleges, the CAP system, as planned, would include a centralized computer facility for processing, storing, and producing equivalency agreements, and receiving terminals on cooperating campuses. The individual articulation agreements would be developed from "cooperative curriculum major sheets" that display the senior college major and support courses and corresponding courses at the community college. These sheets form the basis for the computer programming.[13]

One possible extension of this system is indeed interesting: linking all SCUC campuses and thereby enormously expanding student use, along with sharing computer applications with over forty institutions in other states having similar installations.[14]

In addition to the clearinghouse function and retrieval speed advantages, the flexibility of these systems is an important asset. Changes in agreements can be made economically. Many reviewers can be accommodated simultaneously, and many institutions can be consulted at a glance.

This discussion has dealt only with officially recognized (accredited) institutions and statewide commissions or agencies. The higher education community faces a greater challenge in recognizing and satisfying the need to establish articulation/transfer relationships between more traditional systems and the unorthodox (unaccredited) institutions and organizations that attract large sectors of the population currently unserved by the educational establishment. Attention will be given to this relationship in a future newsletter.

[12]Michigan Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, "Proposal for the Establishment of a Statewide Computer-Assisted Library to Advance Transfer Equivalencies," MACRAO, 1979, p. 2.

[13]California State Polytechnic University (Pomona), "Computerized Articulation Project," CSPUP, 18 July 1980, p. 1.

[14]California State Polytechnic University (Pomona) News Release, 29 August 1980, p. 3.

College Applicants and GED Scores

The American Council on Education's GED Testing Service has prepared information to assist admissions officers in evaluating the applications of persons who have attained a high school equivalency diploma after completing the Tests of General Educational Development (GED). According to the GED Testing Service annual statistical report for 1979, 42.4 percent of the nearly 750,000 examinees that year said they planned further study. The Commission on Educational Credit and Credentials recommends that, for admissions purposes, persons who achieve state-established minimum score levels to earn a high school equivalency credential be considered high school graduates.

The GED battery contains five tests (Writing Skills, Social Studies, Science, Reading Skills, and Mathematics), and scores are expressed as standard scores on a 20–80 range for each test. As part of an effort to standardize the tests, forms were administered to a large nationally representative sample of U.S. high school seniors one or two months before their graduation. Because of this effort, the GED scores for adult examinees can be compared with those for recent high school seniors. The GED standard scores are updated frequently so that a standard score of 50 on each test represents the median score (50th percentile) earned by recent high school graduates. The scores on the current tests reflect the achievements of high school seniors tested in spring 1977.